

The Builder.

NO. LXXIII.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1844.



JOHNS' work

upon "The Anglican Cathedral Church of Saint James, Mount Zion, Jerusalem," which has been for some time lying by us, we this week open and peruse. We believe most Englishmen rejoice at the erection of a cathedral in the Holy City; and very many that it is an English one.

We quote the following from Mr. Johns' work:—

"Jerusalem, or El Kuds (the holy), naturally calls for some slight notice in a work like the present. The Psalmist David describes it thus—'beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north the city of the great King.' Viewed from some points, on three sides (it approaching a quadrangular form), few cities present such a naturally picturesque appearance. The most remarkable points of view are from the east, the north, and the south; that affording the least interest is the one which the stranger first sees 'on his approach from Jaffa, from which place by far the larger number of pilgrims and others arrive, but the traveller who is fortunate enough to have his first glimpse of the Holy City from the north, on the Damascus or Nubious road, the quotation already made from the Psalmist and King of Israel must be brought most vividly to his recollection; his attention is at first attracted by the higher parts of Mount Zion, the Castle of David, the small dome of the Church of St. James in the Armenian Convent, then the domes of the Churches of the Crucifixion and the Holy Sepulchre, and at last the Mosque of Omar breaks on his view, standing in a remarkably solitary position, with its distant minarets, unlike other mosques, in which the minarets aid in forming most picturesque groups. As this building is remarkable for its usurpation of such holy ground, I shall stop a few moments to describe it:—The building, in general form, differs much from other Moslem mosques, it is polygonal in its plan, is lighted principally by a clear-story of the same form as the mosque, and surmounted by a coppered dome, which has ever appeared to me in graceful and beautiful contour of outline, the very perfection of the 'swelling dome,' and unmounted by the sign of the Saracenic creed, the crescent. The whole building is coated externally with Arabesque tiles from Constantinople (in which green, purple, and white harmoniously blend), and has on the entablature numerous quotations from the Koran, in Turkish characters, which are continued entirely round the building; this mosque stands on the centre, or nearly so, of a large quadrangle, called the Harem Sherief, occupying, it is supposed, as near as possible, the court of the temple built by Solomon, and the mosque itself, the site of the Holy of Holies; within this quadrangle are numerous praying places and gateways, of beautifully proportioned Saracenic architecture.

"The view from the opposite direction, the south, must not pass unnoticed. On approaching from Hebron, Bethlehem, or the south, the great fall of the city eastward is very perceptible, as also the joining of the valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat, and the bed of the brook Kidron: here you have a view of the city, apparently surrounded by a natural fosse,

and fully perceive the bold position of Mount Zion, and can easily imagine how splendid must have been the appearance of ancient Jerusalem, with the temple and its courts, the Tower of Antonia, the bridge (a portion of which still remains), which connected the upper and lower cities with the Castle of David, and Herod's gorgeous palace and towers crowning the heights of Zion.

"To the 'LONDON SOCIETY for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews,' is the effort due, which has already made a considerable progress, towards erecting on Mount Zion a Church, in which may be carried out in the sight of the heathen—the Eastern, but sadly corrupt Christian Churches, and the avowed opposers of Christianity, the Jews—that pure and Apostolic faith and form of worship which has been handed down through all ages, and which retains, in our times, pure and untarnished, the faith 'once delivered to the saints.'

"So long ago as the early part of the year 1835," says the Report of this Society, 'the importance of making some more decided effort, in behalf of the ancient people of God at Jerusalem, was deeply felt by many friends of the Society throughout the country; and, in consequence of their urgent and repeated representations, the Committee were induced to make an appeal upon this subject, which was warmly responded to and encouraged.'

"A correspondence was immediately commenced with the Rev. J. Nicolayson, at Jerusalem, on the subject of the best means of realizing these intentions; but it was found that much time was lost and little advancement made in the formation of plans, owing to the want of local knowledge, the peculiar difficulties of the country, and the very great uncertainty of communication at that period between Jerusalem and this country."

"The first movement in this matter, which I find recorded, was the return of Mr. Nicolayson, in November, 1836, to England, in consequence of the difficulties just mentioned, with a double object in view—that of receiving ordination, and having personal communication with the Society upon this important subject. Mr. N. having had several interviews with the Committee, during a residence in England of some months, returned to his sphere of labour; but, through various difficulties, ground was not purchased till late in the year 1838, when two adjoining premises were bought for the contemplated purpose."

"The Report of the Society before-named, in reference to the purchase, says, 'He' (Mr. N.) 'considers that it could not have been better situated; it is on Mount Zion, exactly opposite the Castle of David, near the gate of Jaffa, and on the very confines of the Jewish quarter; its dimensions are sufficient for the erection of a church, and the requisite dwelling houses for four Missionary families.' Its actual available dimensions I subsequently found to be 210 feet north and south, by an average of 120 feet east and west; the boundaries are very irregular, and only one of its many angles is rectangular; this might naturally be expected, as the Orientals rarely build on any premeditated plan. After the purchase of the land, Mr. N. proceeded, with the assistance of a native Greek, to collect materials for future buildings, to repair the old water tanks, and to dig and build another, in order to obtain an adequate supply of water for the contemplated erections, and also proceeded to erect the buildings one story high. This portion of the buildings was commenced on the 10th of February, 1840, and had just reached its present state when Mr. Hillier arrived in Jerusalem to take the charge and superintendence of the building department; he was not, however, permitted to even enter upon any active duties, being seized with fever (so common in that climate), and, in one short month from the time of his arrival, his labours ceased, and those who had hoped much from his assistance were again sorely disappointed. He (Mr. Hillier), however, reported in the only letter he wrote after his arrival, relative to the buildings before-named:—'I find,' says Mr. H., 'that the lower story of a portion of the Mission House has been nearly completed in the rude style of masonry generally adopted in the better class of Arab houses,—a style which consumes a very large quantity of materials, and which I conceive it will be

highly expedient to abandon (especially in the erection of the church), on the ground of economy, convenience, and sightliness, and with a view to meeting, so far as may be practicable, the expectations of contributors.'

In March, 1841, Mr. Johns received his appointment of architect, and at the latter end of April in the same year left England for the scene of his intended operations. At Malta he engaged masons to perform the work.

The foundation of the church is carried down to the solid rock, at depths varying from 30 to 39 feet, for the accumulated ruins were loose and uncertain, and were untrustworthy even for concrete-work. In those ruins what antiquarian treasures lie! future researches may find even the sculptures of Solomon's Temple.

Mr. Johns' publication is, to use the vulgar phrase, very beautifully "got up;" but we wish the intended cathedral which it illustrates had been in size, form, and finish, more like the "Anglican Cathedral" of England herself, for it is but a very small chapel with a stunted nave; the whole length not exceeding 110 feet, and the utmost transverse extent only 64 feet. The style chosen is "early English;" the nave (which is not, however, internally separated as such) is 25 feet wide, and is illuminated on each side by three triple lancet windows, something like those at the Temple Church, London; the transepts extend the internal width of the church at that part to 42 feet—(St. Andrew's Parish Church, Holborn, is throughout 64 feet wide)—the chancel of the church is 16 feet wide, and has a semicircular apsidal eastern termination. At the transeptal crossing is a tower 34 feet square; but as this scarcely rises above the apex of the roof, an effect of remarkable squatness is produced—which, contrasted with the comparatively prodigious altitude to which the pinnacles surmounting the four turret-staircases at the angles of the tower are carried, has a most extraordinary effect. The transepts have, like the chancel, semicircular apsidal terminations, the roofs of which we think have an ugly effect, cutting against the blank arched-paneling which surrounds the exterior of the tower.

Freemasonry, in its stern truth, must condemn some parts of this church. The four pinnacles of the tower, run up like those of Worcester Cathedral, which, as a rudder turned to the extreme in the moment of need, has duty to perform instantly and effectually—have no office but the picturesque,—in which they fail. The roofing is open and without tie. That of the nave, which is 25 feet wide, is restrained by no buttresses, nor has its drift diverged inwardly by any pinnacles; while the choir, which is only 16 feet wide, has its roof, which would hardly move its walls (2 feet thick), restrained by buttresses projecting 2 feet 6 inches, and only 6 feet apart; and in one instance, where a passage has been formed through one of the transeptal buttresses, no additional projection has been consequently given, though it ought on that account to have had still more absolute solid. The angles of the building are well provided with far-projecting buttresses, pinnacled at top, although they have scarcely any force to diverge or restrain; they, however, will tend to render that part of the work more durable.

Of this cathedral we say, go on and prosper, and if its anomalies and construction can be remedied, so be it.

NEW BUILDING-ACT.

Sir James Graham has appointed Messrs. Hoeking and Higgins to be official referees under the new Metropolitan Building-Act.